



COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES  
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

*"Parks Make Life Better!"*

Russ Guiney, Director

John Wicker, Chief Deputy Director

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Executive Offices • 433 South Vermont Avenue • Los Angeles, CA 90020-1975 • (213) 738-2961

July 02, 2013

The Honorable Board of Supervisors  
County of Los Angeles  
383 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration  
500 West Temple Street  
Los Angeles, California 90012

Dear Supervisors:

**APPROVAL OF THE FINAL SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT  
FOR THE PROPOSED OPERATIONAL CHANGES AT  
VIRGINIA ROBINSON GARDENS AND AMENDMENT No.1 TO THE  
FRIENDS OF ROBINSON GARDENS SUPPORT AGREEMENT  
(SUPERVISORIAL DISTRICT 3) (3 VOTES)**

**SUBJECT**

The approval of the recommended actions will adopt the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Report and amend the Friends of Robinson Gardens Support Agreement to reflect the proposed operational changes at Virginia Robinson Gardens.

**IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE BOARD:**

1. Consider the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Report for Virginia Robinson Gardens, together with any comments received during the public review period; find on the basis of the whole record before the Board, that there is no substantial evidence that the project will have a significant effect on the environment; find that the Supplemental Environmental Impact Report reflects the independent judgment and analysis of your Board; and adopt the Supplemental Environmental Impact Report.
2. Authorize the Director of the Department of Parks and Recreation to sign Amendment No. 1 to the Friends of Robinson Gardens Support Agreement No. 010158 dated July 1, 1998, to reflect the proposed operational changes at Virginia Robinson Gardens.

**PURPOSE/JUSTIFICATION OF RECOMMENDED ACTION**

On June 10, 1980, your Board certified an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for Virginia Robinson Gardens to accompany the land use change from a single-family estate (residential purposes) to a public open space and garden. The EIR established a detailed schedule, limiting the hours of operation and number of daily visitors allowed at the project site for guided tours, classes and seminars, and special events, as well as number of employees at the project site. Effectively, the 1980 EIR codified operational regulations for the future use of the project site and has served as the governing land use document since that time.

When the EIR was adopted, the project site was most valued as an extension of the plant testing program at the Los Angeles County Arboretum and Botanic Gardens. However, since the 1980 EIR was certified, the primary objectives of Virginia Robinson Gardens have shifted. Today, preservation, programming, and public access are the primary goals of the project site. To meet these goals, the Supplemental EIR (SEIR) includes revisions to the operation and public accessibility of the project site thus requiring modifications to the operational limitations established in the 1980 EIR.

Approval of the recommended actions will allow Virginia Robinson Gardens to implement the proposed operational changes. In addition, approval of the proposed operational changes will amend Section 4 of the Friends of Robinson Gardens Support Agreement No. 010158 (Attachment I) to reflect the days and hours of operation to conform to the changes described in the SEIR. The proposed operational changes are as follows:

- Days open to the public: Monday through Friday (5 days per week) plus Saturdays, and all holidays, with the exception of Christmas Day and New Year's Day.
- Hours for public use: 7 ½ hours per day from March through October (9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.); and 6 ½ hours per day from November to February (9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.).
- Number of patrons in attendance: Maximum of 100 visitors per day with advanced reservations, in any combination of the currently allowed uses (tours, classes/seminars, commercial filming, etc.).
- Types of events: Public programs to conform to new day/hours and number of participants allowed; however, subject matter for seminar/classes to be determined at the discretion of the Park Superintendent based on how well the classes interpret the historical collections of Mrs. Robinson. This includes continuation of the use of the site for tours of the grounds for biology, botany, and horticulture groups.
- Special Uses: Limited to four special events per year, with expanded themes. Themes would be determined at the discretion of the Park Superintendent. Programs must continue to focus on the historical interpretation of the facility, such as the non-living and living collections housed at the facility, the gardens, etc.
- Parking: All parking requires advanced reservation, as follows:
  - o Parking required on the property
  - o No street parking permitted on Elden Way without advanced reservation, allow visitors to walk to the Gardens from nearby public streets pursuant to street signs; visitors may also walk to the Gardens from public transportation
  - o With limited exception and advanced reservation, allow visitors to be dropped off at the entrance to the Gardens
  - o With limited exception and advanced reservation, allow street parking if a vehicle does not fit through the driveway gate or the porte-cochere

### **Implementation of Strategic Plan Goals**

The proposed recommendations further the Board approved County Strategic Plan Goals of Operational Effectiveness (Goal 1), Fiscal Sustainability (Goal 2), and Integrated Services Delivery (Goal 3), by enhancing education and enjoyment of the general public through the operational changes at Virginia Robinson Gardens in the Third Supervisorial District.

### **FISCAL IMPACT/FINANCING**

The proposed operating hours will not impact staffing costs since the staff is already present from 7 a.m. to 5 or 5:30 p.m. Monday through Friday and their schedules will be adjusted for Saturdays hours. The water and gas costs will remain the same since the facility is currently programmed on a seven day schedule. During the first year of the pilot program it is projected there will be an increase of approximately \$624 per year for the electrical usage for the additional Saturdays per month and there is sufficient appropriation in the Department's operating budget to absorb the projected increase.

### **FACTS AND PROVISIONS/LEGAL REQUIREMENTS**

County Counsel has reviewed and approved this letter and the attached Final SEIR and Amendment No. 1 to the Friends of Robinson Gardens Support Agreement No. 010158.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTATION**

A SEIR was prepared for the project in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Public notice was published in the Beverly Hills Weekly during the week of September 20-26, 2012, pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21092 and posted at the Registrar Recorder/County Clerk pursuant to Section 21092.3. Copies of the Draft SEIR for public review were provided to the County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation, 510 South Vermont Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90020 and the Beverly Hills Public Library, 444 North Rexford Drive, Beverly Hills, CA 90210. Notices regarding the availability of the draft SEIR were also mailed to over seven hundred and fifty homeowners and occupants within a half mile radius of Virginia Robinson Gardens. A total of 35 comment letters were received from the public, including 33 residents and 2 public agencies, the City of Beverly Hills and the Native American Heritage Commission. Responses to those comments are included in the Final SEIR.

There are no significant effects or mitigation measures in the SEIR; therefore findings are not required.

The location of the documents and other materials constituting the record of the proceedings upon which your Board's decision is based in this matter is the Department of Parks and Recreation, 510 South Vermont Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90020. The Department of Fish and Wildlife has determined that for purpose of the assessment of CEQA filing fees, Section 711.4(c) of the Fish and Wildlife Code, the project has no potential effect on fish, wildlife, and habitat and does not require payment of a CEQA filing fee. The "CEQA Filing Fee No Effect Determination Form" was approved by the Department of Fish and Wildlife on September 27, 2012. Upon your Board's adoption of the SEIR, Parks and Recreation will file a Notice of Determination in accordance with Section 21152(a) of the California Public Resources Code and pay the required filing and processing fees with the Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk in the amount of \$75.

**IMPACT ON CURRENT SERVICES (OR PROJECTS)**

Approval of these actions will not impact any current services and programs.

**CONCLUSION**

Please instruct the Executive Officer-Clerk of the Board to return two adopted copy of this action to the Department of Parks and Recreation.

Should you have any questions please contact Julie Yom (213) 351-5127 or [jyom@parks.lacounty.gov](mailto:jyom@parks.lacounty.gov), Norma E. Garcia at (213) 351-5198 or [negarcia@parks.lacounty.gov](mailto:negarcia@parks.lacounty.gov), Elsi Mares at (213) 738-2986 or [emares@parks.lacounty.gov](mailto:emares@parks.lacounty.gov), or Kaye Michelson at (213) 738-2955 or [kmichelson@parks.lacounty.gov](mailto:kmichelson@parks.lacounty.gov).

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Russ Guiney".

RUSS GUINEY

Director

RG:KK:JAR

JY:tls

Enclosures

c: Chief Executive Officer  
County Counsel  
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors